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**IMPORTANT! MIA
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American Lutheran Church
57 East Main Street
Columbus 15, Ohio
U.S.A.

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In the South Pacific,
April 2, 1945.

For the past few months I have been stationed in New Guinea, and while there took particular pains to visit as many villages as possible, and to talk with the natives there as well as I could in the pidgin English that passes as a *lingua franca* in these islands. You may be interested in what I found in an area where the American Lutheran Church conducted a missionary program.

Naturally I had no opportunity to go far from the station and therefore my observations must be confined to those villages accessible with no more than a three or four hour trip by jeep-road inland over routes the Australians hewed through the jungle while driving the Japanese far inland.



U. S. Navy photo

Every village I visited had been burned by the retreating Japanese and now the natives have rebuilt them within the past two years or less.

In all but one village the Japanese had committed no other outrage than the useless destruction of the humble houses as they retreated. In their administration the Japanese had killed no one in the villages I visited.



Every village had made attempts to reconstruct a chapel, some being more successful or more energetic than others.

I thought it rather impressive that these primitive people of small stature should all have made some effort to provide for Christian service while rebuilding their homes and wresting a meagre living from the jungle and the sea. This construction indicated a greater amount of purposeful work and a greater devotion to their religious faith than many would credit to them.



It has been three years since the missionaries left, yet they have their own missionaries.

In each town I found a "preacher-boy" who served as teacher-boy, too. The members of the congregation in one village take turns conducting a morning religious service. All the chapels had a cross outside at one gable end. On a painted sign they had inscribed the name of the chapel in the native language and at the bottom of the sign I found "Lutheran Mission" in English. In one chapel a boy translated an inscription nailed to a rafter over the pulpit, "God is over all." I am confident that their work is as acceptable to them and to God as ours may be to us and to Him.



Most villages maintain some sort of school, the books being those printed locally by the mission board.

Though I asked often to see a Bible and the Negroes professed to have one, they avoided bringing one out. Perhaps they feared I would take it.

The children are most eager to get pencils and paper. On each visit I would carry five or six pencils with me and trade them for such things as the children could bring. I would normally get four lemons or six shells for a pencil. On a sheet of paper I would have each boy write his name in order to prove that he could use the pencil. That I could not read their cramped two-fisted efforts I regarded as of no consequence at all.



U. S. A. Signal Corps photo

In matters of health the jungle folk are not fortunate. Some villages had a "doctor-boy", but none had medicines.

Dull eyed little children covered with deep sores lay on palm mats in the shade and nothing could be done for them. My heart bled for such ones. The Army doctors treat only soldiers, and Australian hospitals for natives treat only those enlisted for labor service. I could not bear to look a second time at those afflicted with nasal troubles who let their noses run unchecked. Perhaps they have no cloth to be wasted on nose blowing.



Ewing Galloway photo

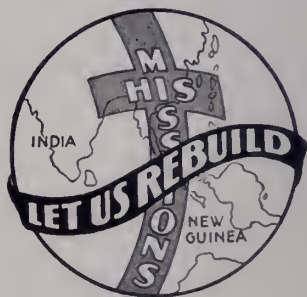
In short, it seemed to me that the New Guinea natives have done their best to restore their villages and maintain their Christian faith. I was impressed with their strict honesty and unexpectedly high moral standards. All of the soldiers commented upon their natural dignity and intelligence. The negroes speak of the time when the missionaries come back. "And will they come back?" I inquire.

"Yes", they assure me with all the confidence in their world, "MISSIONARY, HE COME."

All the outlying schools have been destroyed; all equipment is gone. Only a large church and missionary center which now serves as a nurses barracks remains. At the base of a hill little cemeteries have been fenced in and around them have sprung up supply dumps and military headquarters.

Sincerely,

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FOREIGN MISSION
RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
American Lutheran Church